

When is an ounce not an ounce?

By Roger Boye

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Today's column answers more questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

Q—I've noticed that some companies sell gold by the "troy ounce" while others sell by the "ounce." Which is better?

T.R., Elmhurst

A—There should be no difference. Dealers almost always use troy weights when describing coins made with precious metals. A troy ounce contains 480 grains while most consumer products are measured in the avoirdupois system, where an ounce equals 437.5 grains.

Q—Someone wrote "Good Luck Ringo Starr" on my dollar bill and also drew a star. Would it be worth anything?

W.C., Clearwater, Fla.

A—\$1, its face amount. Extraneous marks on paper money almost never enhance a bill's value.

Q—What can you tell me about a nickel that has a blank "quarter-moon" area on its right side? A bit of the design is missing.

F.H., Highland Park

A—Most likely, your nickel wasn't centered properly while in the coining press. Such off-center Jeffersons might retail in the \$3 to \$5 range on the hobby market.